

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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Almost Persuaded

Does it seem to you that our society has become a hostile, polarized culture? It does to me. The TV and major media sources divide everything into groups without talking about the issues at all. We are either "right" or "left" or "red state" or "blue state, "traditional or progressive", "liberal or conservative".

Sound bites are sent back and forth like missiles, rather than seeking a discourse leading to understanding of the other's views. People seem to me to join only the groups with which they totally agree. There is no time given for discussion with any other people of different views.

Is there anyone left in this society that is trying to convince someone of something they don't already believe? Other than in the courtroom, building an argument to persuade someone of the truth of the matter, seems to be absent. Is there no hope? In a world of loud, caustic, and sometimes fragmented voices, is the voice of truth able to be heard?

Recently I was using my computer to access a satellite with which I could view my home and town from space. There are 100s of millions of people connected to the internet. In a few seconds, we can reach almost any spot on earth. We perhaps now have the greatest audience we have ever had and the best access to the world we have ever had. Should we not "shape" the never-changing truth of the gospel for the particular audience with whom we are engaging?

The Apostle Paul became a Greek to the Greeks,

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TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Ed Anderson Bears His Testimony

As a prelude to the August Communion Service, Elder Steven Smith related a parable from his recent experience sleeping in the surgery of the veterinary facility in which he works while his family tries to find a home to purchase in Savannah, Missouri. He is inured to noises of dogs barking and cats meowing around him, but this night there was a sort of a swishing sound that wakened him. Several times he listened intently, but when he did the noise always stopped. Each time just as he was "twilighting" in his effort to return to sleep, the noise resumed. Finally he got up and moved the contents of his room around. As he moved one container, out jumped a little mouse. Startled in his half asleep condition, Steven leaped into the air. The little mouse sought refuge in the shadow of his foot; and as he came down from his leap, he squished the little animal with his 250 pounds of weight.

He likened the situation to our condition when we are frightened, searching for shelter from the dangers that surround us. Are we seeking to be sheltered by the Lord; or are we in danger of seeking shelter from some "twilighted" source that can instead bring about our destruction!

The congregation was invited to sing the familiar praise hymn, the first stanza of which declares, "Praise Ye the Lord. 'Tis good to raise your hearts and voices in His Praise. His nature and his works unite to make this duty your delight!"

Those designated to receive the tithes, oblations and offerings of the people were asked to take their places. While the offering was being received, the congregation was asked to sing "Where wilt thou place thy trust? In a frail form of clay that to it's element of dust must soon resolve away?" The song answers it's own query, "No. Place thy trust above in one whose boundless power and light thy confidence invite!" At the end of the song, a prayer of thanksgiving, praise and invocation was offered.

The congregation was asked to kneel for the first Sacramental prayer, and the Sacrament was observed, with Cathy Akers furnishing piano accompaniment to the service.

As the serving of the emblems came to a close, Brother Smith announced that he had asked brother Ed to share his testimony, "But

before we do this," he said, "there are also several who are not here today, and several among our group who need the prayers of the Saints. I would like you to look around, to search your heart and say prayers specifically for those for whom the Lord would lead you to pray. As we pray for those who need the help of the Lord, the Lord will lead you to the ones for whom you should pray. We only need three or four prayers. This is the time when we have covenanted with our God. We have the Spirit, and we would like you to pray in the Spirit. Are there those who would like to pray for our brothers and sisters?"

Prayers were offered, especially for several of the young men and women of the congregation, some of whom are facing troubling and some simply challenging situations. Prayers were also offered for all who are carrying burdens, some of which are heavy, sorrowing, heart sick, whatever, that the Holy Spirit would come to them as the Balm of Gilead, of which we sing; that they would know where to look for such blessing. It was asked that the Lord would help us all to a greater level of commitment and to a greater level of service to our Lord and His Kingdom in these last days. Some with physical ills that are in need of healing were also mentioned by name.

Priest Ed Anderson read a scripture from Moroni 7:50-51, "And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity, he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth." Ron Smith sang, to the accompaniment of his guitar, "Here I am again dear Lord. I'm calling on your name. I've done this many times before. But this time is not the same. Lord I didn't come to ask you to give me a new gift. I only came to say, I love you Lord, more than words could ever tell. I know you see in through the depths of my heart well. I love you Lord. There's no other love like yours. And I only came to say, I love you Lord."

The Testimony

First of all, Ed began, it is great to come together to worship one with another, to hear the testimonies which each has to bear, and to observe the lives of each and every individual, which in itself is a testimony. The way has been prepared. We have participated in the Sacrament. From the beginning of time, Christ knew that He would come, He would sacrifice His life that we might live - that we might participate in sacrament, in fellowship with each other and with Him. I am thankful for each and every one here. I am thankful for the testimony which they have in their life which they show. To watch and observe each individual reach and partake of the sacrament, I can look back and say, "Yes. He/ she is bearing a testimony just in reaching in his own service - in his own worship.

I can look at Harold, and I can say, "Yes. I know Harold was an individual in High School. We went to high school together. He thinks I am ornery, and Cathy is nodding also. But I can draw back on his life and I can remember what Harold represented back then. He had a good heart, and he has a good heart now. I can remember Yvonne when she was, I am not sure how old, when I visited their family around Osceola. The Spirit in the Kent family was tremendous. I remember the ministry which your Dad, Vernon, gave, and the testimony which he bore by his actions to his family and to those

around him.

One of the things, if we haven't discovered it before, is that we do not operate in a vacuum. I do not live in myself alone. I move about each and every day in life whether it be on a job or whatever. We have interactions. We go to the store. We talk to individuals in the store, at the checkout counter, helping people who are there by offering, "May I help you"? Sometimes maybe we are rubbed the wrong way, but we are not in a vacuum. What we believe - what we take internally as far as our spiritual life shows on the outside and affects those on the outside. Sometimes we are in a hurry. Sometimes maybe we are not quite in tune with those around us because we are so centered on our particular goal - whether it is to get gas, or to run in and get a loaf of bread. We get kind of irritated because the guy in front of us has a whole bunch of stuff and all you want is just a loaf of bread! You have got somewhere to go and you have got to get there fast; and our self desires shut out the Spirit that could lead us to minister to them.

Again, we are not in a vacuum! What we do is going to affect someone. Just as I am thankful for the ministry of each and every individual here that the Spirit has shone through and ministered to me, so, as you go out into the world, the same thing is occurring. There is no vacuum. It is either good or it is evil. Our effect on those around us is either good or it is evil. We are a witness either for good or for evil.

I can remember Mom telling me about Dad's conversion to the church. I am thankful for those who have responded in the past. I am thankful for Joseph Smith who took it upon himself to respond to the call. I am thankful for the Apostles of old, the Apostles of the Restoration. I am thankful for those of the Reorganization who have responded. I am thankful for those Pastors who took the time and made the effort to minister to me.

I remember one particular Pastor who was always serving on the outside. His life showed it. Bill Ballantyne. Every time he was doing something for somebody else, I think he blessed me. I am thankful for Don McGuheuy who ordained me. I am thankful for those who have responded whose lives have affected mine for the good.

My Dad, I am thankful for his faith. I am thankful for his conversion. He was raised in the Ft. Madison area. He was attending some services, kind of interested in the church, and on the way home one night from one of those services, an angel came to him and said, "The Book of Mormon is true!" It was asked in class, "Who has a testimony of the Book of Mormon?" Well, Dad had a testimony of the Book of Mormon, he maintained that. I don't think there was anyone in the neighborhood that he didn't take the slides to. He took them to Ralph Green. He took it to Don Rauch, to Bertha Bedell, and as a youth, I went with him. I ran the slide projector. I was kind of young at the time, but I remember that testimony. I remember the Spirit. I remember the joy. And although none of those individuals joined the church, I could see the change in their lives. One of Don Rauch's son-in-laws asked me one day, "Is it really worth it?" We were just at the gas station, and I hadn't seen him for a long time, and he asked me, "Is it really worth it?" I said, "Yes, it's worth it!" I knew what he was asking. He didn't see anything in life that was worth living! But it is. There is so much in life that is worth living!

As a youth, I grew up - we didn't attend church a whole lot. After Dad became Pastor at Bloomington, but after that, we went to Leon and were kind of off and on in the attending church part; but I still had the faith. I snuck around and read the scriptures. I didn't

think anybody noticed. I was trying to prevent people from noticing, but Mom had noticed. She provided me with a King James version of the Bible for my birthday, I think it was about 1965. So I continued to read the scriptures. As I was reading the Bible one day, in hiding again, I read words that were not there. I read words that said, "In the last days the church will be called after His name." Is that in the King James Version anywhere? It was there in the King James Version! It contributed to my faith and my growth.

Again, some of the friends that I claimed in high school weren't exactly the upstanding young individuals. Church wasn't number one on the list. About the time I was running around with Ed and Ron Rauch quite a bit, their dad owned the tavern over in Decatur, so that was pretty much where we spent every week night. But I didn't participate. I didn't participate because I knew that wasn't what I my life should be. I knew because I had been taught by my parents - because I had been taught by the Spirit. I had had these spiritual experiences.

I eventually started going to church on my own. Girls have a way of attracting boys to events. So I was going down to Lamoni to church and became involved down in Lamoni. And I remember at a prayer service they were recounting a conference. The speaker, I think it was Ray Zinser, attended the conference and was telling about the important things that had happened at conference. As I was watching him, his face faded away, and in his place stood Christ. These are the kind of things that kept me on the strait and narrow when I was putting myself in places which were not Christ like.

I began to really become interested - really to participating in activities, as an older youth. I never went to camp as a Junior High and High School youth. When I was about 21 or 22 I attended camp as a counselor. About 1974 I spent a summer in Canada as a volunteer in the older youth program. When the time came for my ordination to a Priest, I kept praying asking, "When? What?" and I dreamed of the individual who would stand and confirm my call. So when it came, I knew it was from God.

As we live through our lives, first of all, let's seek to know God's will. Let's seek that Spirit within ourselves. Let's us seek, in that lack of vacuum, to make the right impression on those around us. I am thankful for all of the commitment of all the individuals in the church history and my family have made. Let's make that commitment. Let's be that witness to those people around us. We have come here today. We have partaken of the Sacrament. We have made that commitment. Let's make sure that our hearts are changed. Let's make sure that people on the outside can see that there is a change.

When I was attending Warrensburg, I met a girl in the line getting books. (At that time you got free books. You just paid the ten dollars or whatever. You didn't have to buy books. You got them and turned them back.) I invited her to the Liahona activities. She told, "You know there are people here that I saw in class and knew there was something different about them, but I didn't know what. Now I know! It's their faith in Christ. It's their changed life because of their belief." In that brush with each individual every day, the scripture that I read applies.

Let us make sure that our life mirrors that of Christ. Let's make sure that we suffer long. Let's make sure that we are kind. Let's make sure that we are thankful for what others have and are not envious - that we are not puffed up because of what we have, because of the things which we possess. Let's make sure that we are seeking for the needs of those around us and not our own. Let's

make sure that we are able to take the punches and give love back. Let's make sure that all of the pains and all of the sorrows of life, we are able to bear and not be bitter. Let's make sure that those good things in life - those good scriptures, the Spirit of God - that we believe them in our hearts. Let's make sure that our hopes are for the Kingdom! Let's make sure that we respond to the Spirit of God and be the kind of people that we should be, that we might be ministers for Him.

Our final hymn, "Oh, Master, Let me walk with Thee" seemed peculiarly appropriate to precede the benediction.

The Kingdom Is Yours

George Knotts, who was in charge of the service, presented Seventy Ronald Smith with a momento of his Graceland Days as a member of Agape House with the explanation: "This is a tile that came off of Graceland's Ad Building and here is the most ideal design of the Agape symbol that has been created. It is put together and silk screened onto that tile, and it says, "Ron Smith shares Agape", that means Agape love, "around the world. And on the back it tells where it comes from." The congregation then sang, "Be with me Lord, where e're I go; Teach me what Thou wouldst have me do; Suggest what e'er I think or say; Direct me in the narrow way."

Ron spoke, first expressing his pleasure at being able to share in his home congregation some of the things that have happened as he has been going across the world. He read two scriptures: Ephesians 2:18-22 which reads, "For through him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

And from Ephesians 3:14 - 19, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

After reading the scriptures, Brother Smith commented on the gift he had just received from Brother Knotts. "I don't know whether all of you know what the Agape symbol stands for. In the Greek, there are different words for love. In English we have like and we have love, but in the Greek we have several words for love. One of them is eros, which is the name for the kind of love that a man and a woman would feel toward each other. Another is something like phileo for brotherly love that people have for brothers and sisters. And then there is Agape love, which is the love of God for us. And the Agape symbol is really made of three different symbols. There is a triangle down at the bottom, and the triangle stands for the kind of love that we would have with each other if we love God. If you think of yourself at one side and somebody else at the other side, as you get closer to God, you get closer together. Right in the middle there is a cross, and that is the love of Jesus Christ that He has for us that He was willing to die for us to bring us to God. And

then on the top there is a circle, and that stands for the never ending love of God. That is what I learned about this symbol when I came to Graceland and was in Agape House. I hope people in Agape House still know what that is about. Sometimes I doubt it, but maybe I will have to go tell them what that means. So, thank you, George.”

The Sermon

I would like to share with you some insight that I had on my last trip to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It is caught up in the scripture that I read that says that you are no more strangers or foreigners but fellow citizens with the Saints and of the household of God. Let me tell you the story of William Mwiri. I just met William this trip, and I had the privilege of baptizing him with the Holy Ghost, and later ordaining him as a Priest.

William was a minister in another church. He had a congregation in Uganda. Eric Odida felt that the Lord was telling him to go to Uganda to spread the gospel. Eric had a contact in, I believe it was Musoma, and when he went to talk to this man, the man invited Eric to preach in his church. It was not a Restoration branch, but it was a Christian church. Eric thought that was a good idea, but he thought he ought to tell this man a little bit about the gospel before he actually preached in his church so he wouldn't have any surprises when the time came. So Eric went and stayed in the man's home Saturday night and shared with him about the Book of Mormon and about the Restored Gospel. When it came time for church in the morning, Eric was not asked to preach! William Mwiri was the one who was asked to preach. Eric is pretty flexible, so he sat there and listened to William Mwiri.

William preached about Joseph of Egypt, the Joseph who was sold into Egypt and who helped his brothers. As Eric was listening to William preach, the Lord told him that this was the man that he was sent there to talk to - not the one with whom he had been sharing. So after the service, Eric went to William and started sharing with him about Joseph, one of Eric's favorite topics. Eric believes that the blessing of Joseph - the physical things that happened to Joseph back in the times of the Bible are a type and a shadow of the spiritual things that happen to Joseph today. He believes that Joseph was separated from his brethren and preserved in Egypt in order to give physical food to save the whole house of Israel from starvation. And in the same way, the Book of Mormon, which is the stick of Joseph, is to give the whole house of Israel spiritual food to save the House of Israel from spiritual famine and spiritual death in these latter days.

Eric explained that and many other things to William. William said he had done a lot of praying asking the Lord, “Why is it that preachers today are not preaching the gospel that I find in the Bible?” When he heard Eric talking about the Restored Gospel, he said, “I was not surprised by the Restored Gospel!” He said, “I love the gospel!”

William resigned as a Pastor. He quit the only job he had because he wanted to be baptized. So he was baptized and when we went to Uganda a couple of weeks ago, we were able to baptize him with the Holy Ghost. We also baptized his son Obed in the river there.

There is one other member who had been baptized by water but hasn't been baptized with the Holy Spirit yet. His name is Michael. He grew up in a Muslim home. All his brothers and sisters and parents were Muslim, and when he decided to become a Christian, he was rejected by all of his family. They would have nothing to do with him. I said, “Is it still that way now?” He said, “No. God smiled on me and made me more prosperous than they, so I give them money and keep their children in my home and feed them; so they

don't have any choice but to accept me now.”

Michael loves to sing and when we were there we sang, “This is the Day that the Lord has made.” until I got blisters on my fingers. I still have a blister on my thumb from my guitar, singing “This is the day”, and “This is the hour”, and “This is the time”, and “These are the friends”, and “This is the gospel”, and “This is the truth” and “These are the books”, and you name it. We sang it as a verse of “This is the Day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

We had the opportunity to go to William's home. William doesn't have much money. He lives in a poor area, with pigs and garbage in the streets. It is just like a thousand other slum areas, but William has people meeting in his home. Even though he was not a Priesthood member, he held services and was trying to teach the Gospel. So we met with him in his small home, and the first night that we were there, we went rather late. I had shared some things about the Kingdom of God, and we were making preparations to leave when I said, “You know, we haven't finished yet. We have preached the Kingdom of God, but we haven't healed the sick; and the scripture in Luke 10 says that you preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and heal the sick.” So we asked if there was anybody who needed healing and three or four people were administered to on that night.

The next day, one of the little girls to whom we had administered came to the service. She wanted to sing a song unto the Lord because she had been healed. Another lady who had been sick for a long time came back that day and said she had had the first good night's sleep that she had gotten in a long time. So we had several more to administer to the second day. The third day was our last day there. When William closed the service he said, “Now I want everybody to go home except those who need to be healed.” Nobody moved. Eric and I started administering and Eric said he administered to more people that day than he had ever administered to in his life. I don't know if you can see my little oil bottle, but I brought it with me. I have administered to a couple of people since that day, but this was full when I started, and like one or two drops at a time, this is all that is left. There were a lot of people to whom we administered.

We also went to another home because the lady was too weak to come to William's home to receive administration. We walked a couple of blocks to Robina's house. She was very, very sick. As we came into the home, Eric said that he could tell that she had been sick for a long time. She was a widow with five children. She had a job but wasn't able to work, so it was a pretty desperate situation. She struggled to sit up so we could administer to her, and as I put my hands on her head, it was hotter than any person that I have ever felt. Her temperature was just hot to the touch! After we left, we told William to go back and check on her the next day. The next weekend we were at a Priesthood retreat and William told us that when he went back the next day, Robina was up, walking around and had been healed. And he said, “You guys made a lot of work for us. People thought you were going to be there for at least a week, and so they kept coming to be prayed for, and you guys weren't here, so we had to pray for them ourselves”; and he was expressing joy that we had been able to be there.

Insight Into The Meaning of the Keys of the Kingdom

Well, as I said, there was some insight that we had as we preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. You remember that, in the 24th chapter of Matthew Jesus told His disciples that again the Gospel of the Kingdom would be preached in all the world for a witness to all

nations and then would the end come? I believe that the gospel of the Kingdom is being preached, or at least starting to be preached, in all of the world. There are certainly a lot of openings that are happening.

When Jesus was preaching, He talked about getting into the Kingdom. In the third chapter of John, He was asked by Nicodemus how to enter into the Kingdom. He said you have to be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. In order to even see the Kingdom of God, you must be born of water and of the Spirit. Jesus was talking about baptism as the way you would get into the Kingdom and be part of it. In the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, verses 19-20, Jesus talked to Peter about building His church. He said, "I will build My church." At that time He told Peter, "I am going to give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Jesus repeated that several times to His disciples. In another variation of that in John the twentieth chapter when Jesus was leaving His disciples, it says, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained."

What does He mean by giving the keys of the Kingdom to His disciples?

What can you do with keys that you can't do without keys? (Our speaker took a ring of keys from his pocket.) Here is a key to the science building at Graceland. If the door is locked, I can't get in unless I have the key. Right? Well, what are the keys of the Kingdom for? They allow you to get in to the Kingdom. And in particular, when Jesus was giving the keys of the kingdom of God to His disciples, He was telling them, "I am going to give you the means to let people get into the Kingdom of God. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." He was talking about baptism. He was talking about the gate - the way that you get in - is by baptism. And He says, first you are baptized by the water, and then you are baptized by the Holy Spirit, and that is the way that you get into the Kingdom.

Now, I know that many of us have been baptized, but sometimes we are still looking forward to the Kingdom. We are still thinking the Kingdom is going to come in the future. Sometimes we talk that way. When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He said, "Pray, Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Pray, not that we are going to wait until after we die to be a part of the kingdom - not that we wait until after we go to heaven to be a part of the kingdom. He said to pray that the kingdom would come on the earth - that His will would be done here on the earth.

We talked a lot about the kingdom in Africa, and it was impressed on me that we should declare that this is the way that we get into the kingdom - by baptism. We are offering to people entrance into the kingdom of God. As Eric put it - he was fond of quoting from Ephesians the second chapter, verse 19, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;..." Eric used this illustration. "When my children are at someone else's home, and they want to get a drink of water, they have to ask. They ask the hostess if they can have a drink of water. She will get a glass and get them a drink. But when they are in my house, because they are my children, they know the rules. They know where the glasses are. They know where the water is. They can get a drink any time they want. It is not that they can't get a drink when they are some place

else, but if they are some place else, they have to ask. If they are in my home, where they are the children, they can get their own drink and they can get it any time they like."

Eric says the kingdom is like that. If you are children of the kingdom, you are entitled to the blessings. And if you are not children of the kingdom, then you have to ask; and part of our role, as he explained it to me, is that, as children of the kingdom, we have the privilege and opportunity to hand out the blessings of the kingdom. That was an interesting thought for me, that we are children of the kingdom.

Why were we baptized? So we could be a part of the kingdom! So that we can be no longer foreigners or strangers, but that we can be children of the Kingdom! The blessings are ours, and they are for us to give.

A hymn that says it well is, "My Shepherd will supply my need." The last verse of that song says, "The sure provision of my God attend me all my days. Oh, may His house be my abode, and all my work be praise. There will I find reviving rest and freely go and come; no more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home." That's the way that we are supposed to be with the Kingdom.

Eric pointed out that the Jews waited all their lives for the Messiah. Many generations waited all their lives for the Messiah. In fact, many of them are still looking for a Messiah. But the Messiah came. The Messiah was there, and they didn't recognize that their Messiah had come. The question I would ask this morning, "Are we looking for the kingdom? Are we waiting all of our lives for the kingdom, maybe even when the kingdom has already come?" When the Pharisees demanded of Jesus, "When is the kingdom going to come?" what did He say? He said, "The kingdom doesn't come with observation. It is not something that you are going to see. It is not something that you are going to be able to say, 'Look! Here it is.' or, 'Look, there it is.' For the kingdom has already come unto you." That's what Jesus told His disciples and the Pharisees that were there. The Kingdom had already come unto them.

Now, I am not saying that Zion is here on the earth. I am not saying the city of Enoch has come back. A lot of you know that I try and distinguish between those two, and there is a good reason for it. I believe that the kingdom is already ours, and we hold the keys for other people getting into the kingdom. And we hold the keys to the ministry of the blessings that are there. It is our responsibility to share those blessings of the kingdom; but the kingdom is already here.

Have you ever listened to the words of "Redeemer of Israel"? That was one of the favorite songs we sang over in Kenya. Every time we had an opportunity to sing, people would request it. It says, "As children of Zion, good tidings for us. The tokens already appear. Fear not and be just, for the kingdom is ours, and the hour of redemption is near." The time for Zion is close. It is coming, but the kingdom is already ours.

In section 34:6 of the Doctrine and Covenants we have a similar kind of declaration. "Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound, and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble, and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills, and flourish; and Israel shall be saved in mine own due time. And by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all. Lift up your hearts and be glad; your redemption draweth nigh." Notice that all of those things are in the future. "Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come." That is present tense. That means now. The kingdom is yours until

I come. OK? We have the kingdom. That is what we got baptized into. That is why we are here.

What is the Kingdom All About?

And that is why, in Ephesians 3:14-19, Paul writes to the people, even at that time, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” That is what it is all about. It is the love that we share in the congregation. It is the love that we share between brothers and sisters. It is being filled with the Holy Ghost.

If you think that you are going to die and when you are resurrected, things are going to be better, all you have to do is read Alma the nineteenth chapter. It says, look! You are not going to come out in the resurrection any different than what you were here. You will be the same person. If you have desired to be filled with love and to be filled with goodness all your life, you will be resurrected to that. And if you have been filled with hate and desired evil all your life, that is the way you are going to be resurrected. It is not going to be any different after the resurrection. It is just that you won't die anymore, and you won't have the opportunity to change like you do now. You will not have the opportunity to repent like you do now. Now is the time. We can repent. We can love each other. We can be part of the kingdom, and if we are part of the kingdom now, then we will be part of the kingdom then.

A similar thought is expressed in Collosians 1:12-13, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;” (Note that he is talking about our future inheritance) “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;” Note the past tense in this phrase. He has already delivered us from the power of darkness. He has already translated us into the kingdom. We are a part of the kingdom, Folks, we are the children of the kingdom, and it is our joy and our blessing to be able to share the blessings of the kingdom with people who aren't children of the kingdom, and to offer them the opportunity to become part of the kingdom - to open the door - to unlock the door for them!

More Testimonies From Africa

Let me share a couple more testimonies from Africa. Fourteen priesthood members from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda attended a priesthood retreat in Kisii, Kenya. The retreat started with testimonies. It was a remarkable service that lasted basically all morning, so I am not going to tell you all the stories. Elder Tom Nyaweri was going to Oyugis to meet Aaron Smith and Steve Ferguson. They were in Kisumu with Eli, who is a priesthood member from Oyugis. They were trying to get to Oyugis to meet Tom, but had trouble getting started; so Tom arrived there in the morning ahead of them. They were driving out of Kisumu at about 10:00 in the morning when, all of a sudden Aaron, who was driving, pulled off the road and said, “We need to have prayer.” So they had prayers for the trip and their families, and then resumed their journey. They reached Oyugis about two o'clock and met Tom outside of Eli's house. Tom and ELi started talking in Luo, their native language, and Aaron and Steve couldn't figure out what was being said. Pretty soon, Eli started to cry, and he said to Tom. “I

think you had better tell them what you have just told me.” Tom said, “The Lord has done a marvelous thing here today!”

Then he told about how that morning, he had gotten off the matatu, the public transportation; and just as he stepped off, he heard a voice calling his name, “Tom! Tom!” It was Eli's wife. She was taking their three year old daughter to the hospital because she was very sick. She told Tom that the bicyclist - instead of taxis they use bicycles - the bicyclist who was taking her and her daughter to the hospital, had gone by a different route than usual, and by so doing had come by the staging area where the matatus came in. They were just passing by when she saw Tom get off the matatu and called to him. She thought that it was really funny that they had met and said, “Maybe the Lord wanted us to meet because if you had gone to my home, there wouldn't have been anybody there. Eli is gone and I was on my way to the hospital.” She decided to take Tom home and then go to the hospital.

She took Tom home, got him settled and then took the little girl to the hospital. About half an hour later, she came back with the baby, and she was clearly unhappy. They had done nothing for her little daughter at the hospital. The mother tried to get the little one something to drink, but she threw up. So she was put down to sleep on a bed. Tom was eating some breakfast when suddenly Eli's wife jumped up, ran over to the bed and called out, “Tom, help me! Tom, help me!” The little girl was having a seizure. She was shaking violently, her eyes were rolled up in her head, and she was foaming at the mouth. Then she went limp and stopped breathing. Tom ran over and grabbed her up in his arms. Eli's wife, the little girl's mother was crying out in panic, and Tom said the only thing he could think of was to get her to calm down enough to get his oil out of his bag. He told Eli's wife to go get the oil, and she did that. He anointed the little girl's head with oil, but could only say “God, help us! God, help us!” But, Tom kept praying in his heart, as he held onto the child. A few minutes later he heard a sound like a purrrrr out of the baby's belly. The baby had diarrhea, her eyes rolled back into place, she shook again, looked up as though disoriented and started to sweat. Life came back into her, and she was fine the next day. And so Tom said, “God has done something great here, today.” The men were comparing notes after Tom told his testimony, and Joseph said that the time of the baby's crises was just about the time when Aaron had pulled off the road and told them they should pray for the family; so they were praying in the car as Tom prayed in Eli's home .

The Lord has done marvelous things, and those are the kinds of things that the children of the kingdom can expect. And those are the kinds of things that are happening.

Joseph shared his testimony about having the gift of interpretation of tongues. He was with Steve and Aaron over in Owasi where the people speak Luo. Joseph is not a Luo, and does not speak the language, but he does understand it and was translating for Steve and Aaron. Joseph said that as Steve and Aaron would speak, there would be many, many words for which he would only know the Kiswahili word; yet, whenever he came to translate the word, the Luo word would just come to him. He would say it, and he said it was always the right word! He was praising the Lord for that understanding.

Two final testimonies come from Paul Makawiti. Paul is a priest in Tanzania. He has a small group that he is shepherding along. Again, these guys have nothing except the gospel. Paul said he had been “pestered” about the gospel several times by Eric. He had spent some days with Eric and had learned about the gospel that was

restored to the earth. Eric told Paul that the Lord had revealed to him that he was called to the priesthood. Paul wanted to serve the Lord but was not sure this was the way that he was to serve Him. Eric told him to pray about it, and he had. But Paul said, "I had a heart of stone". That was the way he put it. He just didn't know if this was the right thing to do.

Now there was an evangelist from Ethiopia doing a seminar in Paul's hometown of Mwanza, and Paul felt like this man was a man of God. So Paul and his wife Divian fasted and prayed and said, "Lord, if this is really You calling me, I want this man to tell me." Paul and his wife attended the seminar three days. The first day there was nothing that answered their prayers. Neither was there anything the second day. On the third day the evangelist talked about the donkey that Jesus had His disciples loose and bring to him for His entry into Jerusalem, likening it to the fact that many of us need to be loosed from whatever holds us to be free to serve the Lord. Paul wondered whether this might refer to him. After awhile the man started to prophesy. He said he saw three people in the congregation whom God had chosen for some special work for Him. Two of them were women and one was a man. Then he said he saw hands being laid on the man, and he could not understand that. But Paul could. He took it as his answer that the Lord wanted him loosed to be ordained to be His servant, and he accepted ordination to the Priesthood.

One of the first people to be baptized in Tanzania besides Paul was Nixon Opino. Nixon was a drunkard. He spent all his time from morning till night drinking. When he heard the gospel, he wanted to be baptized. He confessed that even on the day of his baptism he had three beers. But when he was baptized, his desire for alcohol was completely removed, and he has not had a drink since. I had the privilege of baptizing Nixon and his wife Happy with the Holy Ghost, and of meeting his mother and family in their home. Such are the blessings of the Kingdom!

Called to Be Saints

The message for Sunday, August 21, was brought to us by Elder Gerald Bolingbroke. In his sermon he expressed his delight at being back in Iowa after having been gone several weeks this summer. He also read to us from the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 1:6. It is a beautiful scripture about the coming of Christ. He went on to tell us about several things in our society that we are being faced with from day to day and how we need God's guidance and help to be able to meet the challenges in a Christlike, saintly way. Our age is an age of power. In industry, labor, politics, and government, power is a major goal. It is a dream of individuals, or groups, of parties, and of nations. Since the beginning of time, when men were directed to go forth and subdue the earth and have dominion over it, power has been important in our world.

There are many reasons why power has been important. Two examples are found in communication efforts and in the harnessing of elements to control fission which produces electricity. We are in the age of communication where power is used. Telephones, the internet, television, industry and homes all utilize this power. The elements which are needed to create power were made by God in the center of stars. Nations which control the elements like uranium and hydrogen are seeking power. Scientists are now trying to control fusion, which if they do will give mankind unlimited power. We can obtain heavy hydrogen from the sea. It is called deuterium, an isotope of hydrogen found in the sea, which scientists are using

to try to produce controlled fusion.

The power is controlled by men and women. It is because of the quality of the human mind, heart, and spirit, that power is sought in the first place. This power can be our salvation or our destruction. We have controlled the power of rivers to produce electricity to power our homes. We hope that the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ, the Holy One, the power that makes for effective righteousness, is the goal of men and women.

The counsel of Moedecai to Esther comes to mind when he says to her: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14. Who would have thought that Esther would have come to her kingdom at a time to save Israel. Esther was a queen. There was a plot among the people to kill all the Jews. It was Esther who pled with the king to not kill the Jews. We remember Esther's calling, for herself and for her people. There were other people such as Socrates, Joan of Arc, Columbus, Washington, Lincoln, and a host of others who had a high calling. In a time of great need good men cannot be truly happy unless they share. A deeper sense of calling is for a good quality of people, when an entire nation seeks righteousness.

The Scriptures bear consistent testimony that God does in fact call men and women to love and serve him. The children of Israel understood this. In fact, they dated their national life from the time of their deliverance from Egypt. Moses said to them:

"The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," Deut. 7:6.

Throughout history, as one generation has succeeded another generation this sense of special calling was passed on. It colored all they thought and did. As their prophetic leaders helped them to understand the nature and purpose of God more and more, so they came to realize that the promise of blessing given to their father Abraham carried with it a call to service:

In Genesis 22: 17-18 we find: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

Among the chosen people certain men and women were selected for special service. Thus Moses was sent by God to be their deliverer and leader, the sons of Aaron were called to be their priests, Gideon and Samson to save them from their enemies, Saul and David and Solomon to be their kings, Isaiah and Jeremiah and others to enlighten and rebuke them with the word God.

When the Christians came into being, the sense of calling was deepened. It was deepened because those nearest to the Master had the direct personal experience of being called by him, and the ones after the ascension of our Lord had a similar experience of being called by Him through His Spirit.

Remember that after spending the night in prayer, the Master called the twelve apostles as is recorded in Luke the sixth chapter and shortly before He left them He reminded them: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain... I have chosen you out of the world." John 15:16,19.

Jesus chose the seventy in a similar manner and said to them: "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest," Luke 10:2. The number of seventy within the Restoration movement today is small. Our seventy are overworked, and we need more laborers to be brought into His harvest.

This brought to Brother Bolingbroke's mind a story about the harvest. This story took place when Alexander Smith was a patriarch from 1893 to 1962. Alexander gave Florence Johnson a blessing in which she was told that if she was faithful and true she would have spiritual influences that the world would not give, neither could it have.

She tried to follow God but many times she made grave errors. When she went in humility and prayer and truly repented of her sins, she knew that God forgave her and would help her all the days of her life.

Florence was told through His messenger or angels to fear not. While she had never seen these messengers, she had heard their voices at different times.

At one time in her life, she passed through a tornado that struck Omaha, Nebraska, on March 13, 1923, Easter Sunday. After this experience she was terribly frightened of every cloud that passed in front of the Sun because she thought of the devastation of a tornado. She tried to exercise faith. To help keep her mind off an incoming storm, she would start doing laundry in the middle of the afternoon, trying not to think of the storm. She tried hard to get rid of the fear, but she couldn't shake it. She remembered praying about it. She was one who strongly believed in the power of prayer.

Late in the fall of the same year when she passed through the tornado, she dreamed she was in her mother's house. Her sister Stella and herself were in their old bedroom and in bed when it started to lightning. Stella said to her "Oh Florence, pull down the shade." As she started to pull the shade something wonderful happened to her. All the fear left her as a voice spoke and said, "Fear not, this is God's way of bringing the wicked to repentance." At this point a vision opened up. She was no longer in her mother's home but in her own bed, and she was awake. She saw the moon shining in the window across the baby's bed which was in her room. She saw, as if on a movie screen, in a large wheat field, a small, perfectly formed tree. Every branch and every leaf of the small tree made the tree perfect. From alongside this tree, she saw a farmer in a farmer's wagon going into the field. He got out, put up the stakes on the wagon as if to hold more wheat, then he started to preach to the wheat. He preached with all his power, these words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. After preaching throughout the field, he went to the center of the field, or where Zion is, and took one handful of wheat from there, went back to the wagon, took the stakes down, walked away toward where he started and seemed very sorrowful. Then the vision came together and closed.

After this experience, she felt like she had talked to God. His wonderful love stayed with her for about three weeks. She could not fear, worry, or hate. She loved her enemies, she loved people who abused her and her family and ridiculed their religion.

The interpretation of this vision was that the gospel was being preached as a witness and that when the ministers would preach repentance, only a handful of righteous would receive the Lord at his coming. The Church was small but perfectly organized, and the Kingdom of God was at hand or not far off. The dream was literally fulfilled in about a year's time. The storm and everything just as it was in the dream before the vision opened up was fulfilled.

This vision was a great help. Florence was told not to fear, as God's way through the elements raging, was to cause people to repent. It also showed how wicked the world was, and that only a handful would receive the Lord at His coming, as told to us before in the scriptures.

Florence was made to feel the same spirit that Stephen had

when he was stoned to death. Under that good Spirit she could stand anything. She could love anyone even if they put a knife through her back. It was a foretaste of heaven and no sacrifice is too great in having this Spirit as a reward for righteous living. Nothing could make one so happy. The power of God worked through both the storm and through Florence's life. The physical power and the spiritual power of God surrounds us.

Brother Bolingbroke went on to explain to us that after the Master walked the earth and He was no longer with His disciples, men were called by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is shown by the story of the call of Saul, who later became Paul. We are told that after the Lord appeared to Saul on the way to Damascus, the Lord also appeared to Ananias and told him that Saul was "a chosen vessel" to carry the good news to the Gentiles and to bear witness before kings and the children of Israel, Acts 9:10-16. Many years later, Paul gave his own account of the words which came to him through Ananias:

"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard," Acts 22:14,15.

Thus the apostle Paul fulfilled his mission in spite of many trials which was due to his sense of having been specifically called. He told the elders from Ephesus, who met with him at Miletus:

"The holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish by course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the Grace of God." Acts 20: 23, 24

After talking to his wife about her recent trip to meet with the saints in Liberia, Brother Bolingbroke discovered that Randy Vick, the elder who was stationed with the U.N. in Liberia and who was instrumental in getting the Buchanan Restoration branch started, talked earnestly to the priesthood there about how God had chosen them to be members of the priesthood. God made the decision that they should be in the priesthood. It is not a task that they can request of themselves. The power came from God.

This sense of calling was not confined to the Apostle Paul. Both he and Peter made it clear in their letters to whom they wrote that they fully accepted this idea. The letters reminded the readers of what they already knew. See Gal. 1:6; Col 3:15; II Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 1: 8,9

We see that individuals were chosen for a special work and that there is a marvelous purpose in creation. Isaiah put it this way:

"This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isaiah 14: 26, 27.

Paul put it this way: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Rom. 8:28.

John was particularly impressed with the purpose lying behind the calling of the Lord Jesus, saying: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." I John 3:8

When the gospel was restored, the Saints felt again the purpose of God. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris were chosen as major Book of Mormon witnesses. In a time of difficulty the Saints were reminded that "the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God, can not be frustrated, neither can they come to

naught,” D & C. 2:1a. Two years later, in a revelation of great beauty and significance, they were called to bear this testimony:

“Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof, for beside him there is no Savior; great is his wisdom; marvelous are his ways; and the extent of his doings, none can find out;

his purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand; from eternity to eternity he is the same, and his years never fail,” D & C. 76:1.

When we look back at the records left by the members of the Church in the early days of the Restoration, it is not difficult to see some of the mistakes they made. But it is also apparent that they were men and women who had great faith, courage, and hope. These qualities were rooted in the conviction of the Saints that there was a divine purpose in creation and in history. This purpose was made known to them by the revelation of God in Christ and by the Holy Spirit.

The calling to a special service is not confined to any one group of people, but whenever a person accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and their example, they do so because they have already accepted Him and His way of life and are led by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul was also concerned about the calling of members of the body of Christ. In the Corinthian letters he started out by announcing his own call to an apostle, but then he addresses the letter:

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,”

I Cor. 1:1, 2.

In the mind of Paul those “in every place” who acknowledge the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ included the “beloved of God, called to be Saints” who resided in Corinth or Ephesus or anywhere else.

So we can see power in different ways. There is the physical power that was created by our Heavenly Father when he first created the world. This includes the power found in the elements which we can use for both good and evil. And then there is the spiritual power that is sought by the righteous men and women of the world. This spiritual power must become a part of our lives if we are to use the physical powers of the earth in ways that are meaningful and useful in building the Kingdom of God.

The power of God is working throughout the world today. We are hearing many testimonies about the work opening up in foreign lands as well as in the U.S. It should be our prayer that God will continue to provide laborers among ourselves who can go to these places to carry on the work which He desires of us. Brother Bolingbroke’s message ended with his desire that a prophet or Christ himself would soon come to give us direction and leadership in the Church.

Fear Not, Little Flock, The Kingdom Is Yours

Seventy Ron Smith began with a scripture reading from DC 34:6. “Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound, and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble, and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills, and

flourish; and Israel shall be saved in mine own due time. And by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all. Lift up your hearts and be glad; your redemption draweth nigh. Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly. Even so. Amen.”

High Priest Rob Rolfe then introduced his special music selection by saying, “This song is the only instance I know of in the Bible where they sent a whole army to capture one man. Now you might think about Rambo, and John Wayne, and Indiana Jones, all these people who seem to overcome impossible odds, but do you know of anybody that they sent an entire army to capture them? This comes from the sixth chapter of the second book of kings.” He followed with a ballad about Elisha with the affirmation, “There’s more that stand on our side, no matter what you see.”

Ron thanked Rob for the music, saying that was one of his most favorite Bible stories--how the army came to get Elisha. They all marched up to Elisha’s house. His servant ran out, looked at the army and was very much afraid. He ran back to Elisha and cried, “Alas my master! how shall we do?” Ron read 2 Kings 6:16 “And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” And the servant asked how could that possibly be? Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant would be opened. And when they were opened, he saw the chariots of fire all around the army. Elisha then prayed that the eyes of the army would be blinded. And it was so. It was not that they couldn’t see anything, but they just did not recognize Elisha. Elisha asked them, “Who are you looking for?” They answered, “We are looking for Elisha.” Elisha said, “I will take you to him. Just follow me, and I will show you where to go.” Elisha guided the whole Syrian army right into the middle of the Israelite army. Then he said, “OK, Lord, open their eyes.” When they recognized Elisha, they also recognized that they were surrounded by the Israelite army.

There is a little part of the story that was not included in the song. The Israelites asked if they should kill all the prisoners they had captured. Elisha replied that if they had taken them prisoner in a fight, they would not have killed them. He said that instead of killing them, they should make a feast for them. Verse 23 says that the king of Israel “prepared great provision for them; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.” The Lord won the day.

That story has a lot in common with my theme for the day, which is to “Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold, I come quickly. Even so. Amen.” Whatever happens, the Lord says that we don’t need to fear, because the kingdom is ours until He comes. You remember that Jesus talked an awful lot about the kingdom. In Luke 12:34-35 He says, “Therefore seek ye to bring forth the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Now Jesus wasn’t talking about getting into the kingdom after you die. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he said to pray “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.” He was telling the people that they could be part of the kingdom even now. This is the good news that the restored gospel has, that you can be part of the kingdom here on this earth. And you can have the blessings of the kingdom even now. You don’t have to fear! You don’t have to wait till after you die. If you are willing to come into a covenant relationship with the Lord, to be baptized, to have a remission of your sins, He will send you the gift of the Holy

Ghost. That is the door into the kingdom.

Our Book of Acts

Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Righteousness, peace, and joy. This is what the kingdom is. Those of you who missed our prayer service last Wednesday night missed a really neat service. Much of the service was spent thanking the Lord for the blessings that He had given us, things that we had prayed about, and those prayers were answered.

Some people think about the book of Acts, and they think, wow! All of those marvelous things were happening in those days. Why aren't they happening now. I have heard some people talking that way recently. But if you think about our congregation and the things that have happened here,--if we were to write down the things that had happened in our congregation in the last ten years or so, we would have quite a book of Acts.

I was thinking about the first time that we met the Ed Anderson family. They came to a retreat over in Nauvoo with the congregation. At that time, Brandy had broken her leg, and it had not healed properly. She was not able to run, and she couldn't walk correctly. She was administered to -she was prayed for according to the way the Bible says to do it. They will anoint them with oil and the prayer of faith shall save the sick. Brandy's leg was healed. Not only was she able to walk, but she was able to run and play basketball and do all of those things. That is something amazing that has happened. I think of brother Rob Rolfe. When he was in the hospital. He went in for some surgery on his back. It wasn't supposed to take a long time. Well, I guess the surgery didn't take a long time, but he didn't come out from under the anesthetic. I remember when Norman called on the phone and told me that we needed to go to the hospital. He took Dad and myself, and we raced over to the emergency room at the Leon hospital. They let us into the hospital. We saw Rob. He was connected to all kinds of apparatus all over the room, and there were people running everywhere. Norman said to Dad and me that we needed to go in and administer to him. So we ducked underneath the tubes and got over to him. Everyone was still working. They didn't slow down a bit. We anointed his head with oil, and prayed for him, and then we left. Afterwards, Norman told us that the anesthesiologist said that the medicine that we brought was what Rob needed, because he came out of the anesthetic after that.

I think of Jerry Slayton. I think of the years that he had after the doctors said that he was going to die. I remember how difficult it was for Jerry to move. Jerry's office was down in the basement of Briggs hall. In order to get up to his classroom, he had to climb two flights of stairs. He would have to stop on the landing to get his breath because he wasn't able to breathe. He wanted to go to Mexico to see the ruins on our Winter Term. As he was making preparation to go, a cancer reappeared on his face. He was almost not going to tell the doctor about it because he was sure the doctor would not let him go. But we prayed for him, and the cancer left. It just left! Jerry was able to go on our trip. We have pictures of Jerry climbing all the way to the top. He did not stop for anything, and he bore testimony that the Lord strengthened him and helped him through all that time.

I remember when I came back from Kenya the first time. A mosquito had bitten me out in Kisumu. I got home and developed Malaria. Because I was having a procedure to try and fix my leg, I did not recognize that I was getting sick until I was really sick, and the doctor did not recognize that it was Malaria until I had had it for some time. So I was in pretty bad shape when I finally got to the

hospital. I was kind of an attraction at the hospital, because there just are not many cases of malaria in Iowa. So everyone came to see me - all the medical students and everyone. One of the nurses came by and gave me three sheets of paper that she had Xeroxed out of a medical journal on malaria. I read them, and it told about the four different types of malaria and their symptoms. It was clear to me which one I had, because the symptoms fit perfectly. I had the kind of malaria that goes to the brain. There are other kinds that go to your liver, and you can live with that for a long time and never get rid of it, because it gets in the liver and doesn't quit. But the kind that goes to the brain is generally fatal. When the doctor came in and saw those sheets, she said that I probably would not want to read them until after I got well. I said I had already read it. But I really felt calm, and I wasn't afraid. Because of the prayers of all of you and of the Saints all over, the Lord spared me, and I was healed. Within a week I was out of the hospital. I had a lung collapse, and so I had to go in another week for that, but it wasn't for the malaria. The Lord spared my life.

I think of all of these many, many blessings that we have had. We have had spectacular blessings in this congregation because of the love of God and His goodness towards us, and the prayers of the Saints.

I think of George Knott's family, and the little baby whose heart was not formed correctly. They life flighted the baby to the hospital. George went over to Rob's office and the two of them prayed for the baby over the phone. And when the baby got to the hospital, the heart was OK.

Folks, the Lord doesn't guarantee that nothing bad will ever happen. But he says, "Fear not!" You don't have to be afraid. Even though every one of us will someday die, He has promised that we will all be resurrected. That is the promise. But not only that. In the meantime, we have the promise that the kingdom is ours until He comes. As I have been in Africa, I have watched the kingdom take hold in people's lives. And what a difference it makes! I have seen people changed completely. I have seen healings, and I have seen the Spirit of God come into the lives of people and transform them as they have come into the kingdom.

I think of the little baby that Doug and I administered to on the second trip that I had. We went up to Eldoret, and we were preaching the gospel of the kingdom and answering people's questions about the Bible. A couple came in with a nine month old baby and asked if we would pray for their baby. The baby had been sick, and had not eaten or drunk anything for four days. The baby was completely limp - lifeless. He was gasping for breath, and was just limp like a rag in his parent's arms. "Would you pray for our baby?" And so we opened the scriptures read from James 5:14-15. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;" We said, "Is this what you would like us to do?" They replied that they were not from our denomination. I said, "Well, I never heard of Jesus asking anyone what denomination they were from before healing them." (In fact, He says, "Freely you have received, freely give." As children of the kingdom, we have that opportunity to give the blessings that he has bestowed.) So they said that is what they would like us to do. As I got up with Doug, I nudged him and said, "Here is the test, and thank you Lord for the opportunity."

I took the little baby in my arms. Doug anointed his head with oil and put his hands on his head. He prayed for this little one. He

says that as he prayed, he felt the fever leave. I gave the baby back to the parents, and the baby kicked his leg and sat up. He was healed! I know that God has great love for people, and he is willing to share the blessings of the kingdom with anyone who will ask. But what does it require from us? What does it require of those who are part of the kingdom? Because it does require something. It requires from us that we walk humbly, that we judge righteously, that we live according to the law which he has given so that we can have His Spirit to always be with us. And when we come together for the communion each month, we witness, when we take the bread and the wine, that we are willing to take His name, and always remember Him, and keep His commandments, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. That is the thing that He said for us to do.

So many times we get involved in things that are second best at most. We waste so much time. We get addicted to things. Some people get addicted to drugs and things like that. In my case, my addiction is basically computer games. We get addicted to work, I don't know what everyone gets addicted to. There is an interesting passage in I Corinthians 16:15 that says of a couple of men, "they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Somehow, if we could get addicted to the ministry of the saints, and to always keep his commandments, and to be witnessing, and to share the gifts of the kingdom! We have that opportunity in our hands, because Jesus says, "Fear not, the kingdom is yours until I come." Not that it's going to be yours after I come. Not that you are going to wait till after you are dead to enter the kingdom. He says, "The kingdom is yours until I come."

I think that is good news for all of us. I think that we have an extraordinary opportunity these days to be living in the kingdom. And we need to not forget.

Some of us are very concerned about the church and the situation that the church finds itself in. I am concerned about that. I am concerned that we have a church for our children. I am concerned that my sons have grown up without a lot of the ministry that I knew. And I am concerned that my granddaughter may grow up without that ministry as well. But we don't have to be afraid, because Jesus said, "Fear not, the kingdom is yours until I come." And if you have been baptized, (and turning to Gable Galusha) and you are going to be baptized in just a little while, and you will have the opportunity to be baptized by the Holy Ghost as well. That is the door. That is the entrance. That is the way you get into the kingdom. Once you are there, you have to live for it.

I was told by someone who is wise that the spiritual gifts are not just to be sought for and received, but to be lived for and used. I have heard some people asking, "Why aren't we having spiritual gifts anymore?" I think the answer is that we need to put ourselves in the position where we have to use them. We have a tendency to think that we have to have the gifts first, before we are put into a position to use them. But it doesn't work that way. If you put yourself into the position where you are trying to minister to people's needs, and you get into a position where you absolutely cannot do what needs to be done, that is the time when the Lord can pour out His blessings and give you the strength that you need. That is the time when the Lord can give you the blessings of the kingdom.

The last time I preached here I shared two testimonies from Kenya that I would like to share just briefly again for those who were not here. When we were in Kenya this summer, there was a priesthood meeting at which some of the priesthood from Kenya shared testimony of the gifts of the Spirit. Joseph, from Sotik was

telling about how he had taken Aaron Smith and Steve Ferguson to Awasi. They were supposed to have an interpreter, because the people of Awasi speak Luo. Joseph understands Luo, but does not speak Luo, as he is not a Luo. But Joseph was the only one who understood English, so he was the interpreter. As he began to interpret for Aaron and Steve, Joseph said that they would use a word that he only knew in Kiswahili, but when he spoke, he would speak in Luo, and it would always be the right word. He was in that position, and had the gift of the interpretation of tongues. And, oh, was he thrilled! Everybody was thrilled! The gifts are there, and they are there for the using. They are not there for the seeing or the taking. But they are there for the using! And we can be assured as children of the kingdom that we can use those gifts.

Some of you have looked at the story of Jesus healing Jairus's daughter after she was dead. And you say, "Wow, if only Jesus were here today." And yet only three weeks ago, Brother Tom Nyaweri went to the home of Eli, in Oyugis, Kenya. Eli's three year old daughter was taken to the hospital. She came home, and the doctors had not done anything. She was laid on the bed sleeping. All of a sudden Eli's wife jumped up and called, "Tom, help me. Tom, help me." The little girl was having a seizure. She was frothing at the mouth, her eyes rolled up in her head, and she was shaking violently. Then she went limp and stopped breathing. She stopped breathing completely, and her mother began to wail, as is the custom in Kenya when someone dies. Tom ran over and picked up the little one, and told her mother to calm down and go get his bag and get his oil. She brought the oil, and Tom anointed the baby's head, and he said the only words that would come out of his mouth were, "God help me, God, help me." But he said he kept praying in his heart, and after a few minutes, the little girl started shaking again, her eyes rolled back into place, she started to sweat, and she was healed. Those things happen. Even in this day.

If you want to know where the real miracle is, you don't have to go farther than this congregation. As Kent Clisby was sharing with us last Wednesday night, I remember that ten years ago we were praying for Kent. He had been separated from his family. I remember that as I prayed, I just felt like, Lord, how can you take care of this? What can I pray for. I did not know what to pray for. I felt devastated. I knew that Kent felt that way. I knew that the Lord could do something, but I did not know what He could do. I had felt like maybe we could help Kent by giving him a church family, but it wasn't the same as his own family. And then after all these years, to have a family back and be reunited. There is the miracle. That is what God can do.

We do not have to fear. He says, "Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come." So as we go from here, let us promise ourselves that we are going to do those things that are right in the sight of God. He will forgive us of the things that we have done wrong as long as we promise to do what is right. Let us promise to keep his commandments. Let us promise to love each other, no matter what. Let us promise to do the things that would allow His Spirit to be with us. And those gifts and blessings and things that He has done in the past, He will do in the future. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And he promises that "the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold I come quickly. Even so, Amen."

The service was concluded with the hymn, "O master let me walk with thee." and a benediction by Rob Rolfe.

News and Notes

Congregational Youth Perform at County and State Fairs

Cessaries, Jazmyn, Aquila and Gabel Galusha performed in a number of county fairs to qualify for a chance to compete in the Iowa State Fair where Cessaries and Gabel advanced to the semi-finals this year.

As a result of this honor, they are qualified to participate in the Bill Riley competition again next year. Cessaries played a piano solo and accompanied Gabel as he performed on the violin. Aquila on his guitar and Jazmyn on her violin qualified to play in the Bill Riley competition by winning the contest at West Liberty but they did not advance to the semifinals. Jazmyn also included a little dance in her performance with Aquila.

Colleen Wilcoxson rode her horse in barrel race fair competitions.

Fall Retreat Set

September 23-25 has been set for the South Iowa Fall Retreat at Lucas, Iowa. The Theme for the weekend is "Come, Follow Me". Guest ministers will include Seventy Neil Simmons and Elder Doug Patterson. Both men have been involved in ministry outside the United States of late. Classes and activities for all ages are planned. The list of teachers and other ministries is long and includes Seventy Ronald Smith and his wife Di who are in charge of the campfires and mixer. Ron also has charge of the testimony session of Saturday afternoon. David Drummond is in charge of the healing service. The Nauvoo congregation has the early worship on Saturday. The Genesee congregation is in charge of the prayer and testimony service on Saturday evening. The Mt. Ayr congregation in charge of the Sunday preaching service with Neil Simmons as the speaker. Children and youth teachers include Neil Simmons, Di Smith, Alberta and Suzie Cunningham, Mary Drummond, Beverly Walker, Mark Deitrich, Henry Epperson.

All meals are provided by the camp management with only minimal assistance from the participants in keeping the facility clean and in order. Campers will need their own bedding and toiletries.

As has been the custom, there is no set fee for attending the retreat. Every one is invited. Free will offerings will be expected to cover the cost of all. Preregistration is requested to assist with meal and housing planning. To register call or write Bud and Mary Drummond at 4005 N. W. Hidden Pointe Rd., Independence, MO 64015, telephone 816 678 9015. Registration at the camp site Friday evening begins at 5:00. The first activity is the mixer and campfire led by Ron and Di at 7:00.

Lucas is east of Osceola just off of highway 34, and Jericho Hills is a camp site at the north edge of town. From the highway, follow Division Street to Front Street. Take a right and follow Front Street to First Knotts Street. Turn north (left) onto First Knotts Street and proceed to Jericho Hills just north of town.

Business meeting September 7

Instead of meeting in a home for prayer service on September 7, we will meet at the church in Mt. Ayr for the annual business meeting at which officers for the year are chosen. Our Pastor has announced that not attending will be interpreted to mean that you

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison
Mount Ayr, IA 50854

From the Pastor's Desk

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a Roman to the Romans and a Jew to the Jews. He had great successes, but sometimes, the appeal just didn't quite make it. As King Agrippa said, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian". (Acts 26:28)

Have you been trying to persuade anyone to accept the truth of the gospel?

News and Notes

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are ready to accept any position to which you are elected.

Congregational Retreat Anticipated

Plans are being made for a congregational retreat some time in October. Watch for announcements.

Students Return to College

Cessaries Galusha and Keston Smith have returned to UMKC in Kansas City, Mo., Heidi Winkler to William Jewell in Liberty, Mo., Brandy Anderson to CMSU at Warrensburg, Mo., and Jared Beck, Erica Clisby and Anan Smith are attending Graceland University in Lamoni. Our prayers are with them all.